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672

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ABSTRACT

Faculty role conflicts with respect to seventeen work activities are examined in a rapidly changing university School of Education. Actual and perceived expectations for each activity with respect to the role sets of undergraduate and graduate students, administrators, and self are shown. Difficulty in fulfilling expectations is a third measure of role conflict.

Faculty experience greatest role conflict with respect to self-set standards. Those work activities which are the most public (research, publications, institutes) produce greater stress than do either teaching or service functions. The consequences of purposively increased stress are discussed. Implications for faculty careers are indicated.

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INTRODUCTION

Uncertainties surround faculty careers in ways quite unanticipated but a few short years ago. A plentiful field from which all were nourished now is plagued by a draught and a rash of infections that raise doubts among some regarding even survival of the fittest. Mitigated pressures from students within colleges and universities have been replaced by intensified demands from above and without. Increased teaching and workloads, reduced salary increments, termination of tenure, curtailed opportunities to relocate -- these and other institutional and societal demands mutate career aspirations and plans.

Consequently, research is particularly timely when faculty reactions to stress constitute the major ingredient. No doubt stress-causing factors vary from college to college. Likewise, faculty responses to role conflicts are determined in part by local conditions and options. Nonetheless, professional norms have universal dimensions that transcend a particular situation. Hence, learning how one faculty responded to a stress saturated environment provides insights of broad significance.

Society depends heavily on the fruits of her colleges and universities, even when she expresses disapproval of the appearance of the garden. Educated and trained people as well as knowledge and expertise are her harvests. This study examines the consequences of the purposeful upsetting of an environment's homeostasis. Ordinarily, induced mutations are either letnal or have deliterious consequences. On the other hand,

evolution has been contingent upon improved mutants, the creation of new species. Whether purposeful tampering has lethal or beneficial societal outcomes, then, is no idle concern.

Two important questions follow from concerns of faculty stress. First, which of the many professorial work activities will be most sensitive to the increased demands?[1] What role sets produce the greatest stress?

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[1]Increasing time on the job is not a possible response. Academics work on the average of 57 hours per week (Blackburn and Trowbridge, 1972), more than any other occupational group. Hence increased demands can receive a reallocation of priorities of activities, but not an additional effort.

Second, what effects on faculty performance result from increased stress? Are certain psychological attributes more beneficial (harmful) than others for dealing with role conflict?

This paper addresses the first question. The second kind receives attention in Clark and Blackburn (1972).

THE SETTING

"Mideastern" has been an atypical mid-20th century university. Unlike Dunham's (1969) emerging universities, Mideastern never was a normal school, albeit teacher training has been a major post World War II activity. Prolonged dormancy had been her distinguishing characteristic. She had no natural evolutionary path to follow as did the many Northerns, Southerns, or Centrals across the country -- to state

college to M.A. programs to doctoral offerings in a limited number of fields. Nor did Mideastern have a dominant state university with whom to compete for a place in the sun. She is the state university.

Rather, Mideastern's prolonged inactive state stems from neglect. Her ecological niche has been in a watershed of long established private higher education of high pedigree. Environmental climate of opinion supported the elitist species. Egalitarianism came late to Mideastern's state. When concerns for the many finally competed with those for the few, Mideastern responded with gusto. A comfortable ecological balance was rudely upset.

New leadership and money arrived simultaneously. Mideastern was irradiated by considerable external energies. Induced mutations replaced natural selection as the process of change. New species competed for enriched nourishment. The university set high goals, including a national ranking within a decade. To acquire a legitimate pedigree in less than a normal gestation period necessitated implanting species from without. Grafting on embryos in the system became a standard practice. Pressure to create hybrids from those about to fossilize was applied. In vivo became in vitro almost overnight.

So did new stress on faculty, and not surprisingly so. In addition, to the pressures generated by ambition, conflicts from overpopulation were plentiful. While the University as a whole tripled its enrollment from 1960 to 1970, the School of Education quintupled its student body. Also, whereas by 1970 the proportion of students at the graduate level has risen to one-sixth for the total university, the School of Education soared to nearly 50% at the post baccalaureate level. And, on top of these disproportions, the student to faculty ratio in the School of

Education was more than two and one-half times that of the remainder of the university. The faculty suffered from almost every known cause of tension.

This study examines the effects on the inhabitants of one unit within Mideastern, those within the School of Education. Here a basic segment with bottom-of-the pole pecking order status for university respectability (to wit, strong arts and sciences departments at the graduate level) had to become not just improved but outstanding if it were not to drag down the aims of the leaders. It would not suffice to simply grow around the School of Education (although this was done, too). The number of clients here were too many. The School of Education also had to rise. Hence faculty pressures here are probably greater than anywhere within Mideastern.

Graduate programs, visible activities like institutes and workshops, research, publications -- these are the marks of the king of forest. Top university administration recruited a dynamic leader for the School, a person dedicated to the university's aims and aspirations. Growth made possible hiring new faculty, individuals expected to better accomplish the new mission than many who had spent years harvesting bachelors of science in elementary education.

Coupled with the increase quantitative overload of students described above, new output expectations were being transmitted from on high. Interviews with twelve faculty prior to focusing the study and designing the instruments qualitatively demonstrated that overload was the faculty's number one complaint. The overload was so great that the value in

quantifiably demonstrating the existence of stress seemed redundant, especially since the degree of role conflict would be relative, not absolute, anyway. Hence this inquiry takes the existence of stress as given.

Klapper (1967) found faculty role strain in four prestigious liberal arts colleges vis a vis faculty relations with the administration and college. Earlier Ramer (1963) uncovered different role expectations for administrators and faculty at Ohio State University. Parsons and Platt suggest that role conflict among faculty tends to be greatest in institutions undergoing rapid and basic change. They state:

> As we have already implied, it is not the actual pressures which seem to be generating the degree of conflict experienced among faculty at medium differentiated schools, but the inarticulated demands (1968: VI-21).

The cited studies lay a foundation for this inquiry and demonstrate the fruitfulness of role conflict theory as the conceptual scheme. However, the earlier and other related research in the area have not included student expectations and hence measures of stress with respect to this role set. Nor have prior studies dealt with an institution in a very rapid state of change. This study adds both of these features. In addition, it refines the faculty work role so as to delineate several activities within the traditional broad categories of teaching, research,and service.

The social psychology of role theory used here follows Kahn et al (1964: 1-91), and Katz and Kahn (1966:175-185), even though the research supporting

organizational behavior still resides almost exclusively in business, civic, and industrial settings. The exploratory study centers more on general research questions than specific hypotheses. What agreements exist between role expectations held for faculty work activities by undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty? Are faculty role conflicts the same for each work activity? for each role set? for self? What relations exist between faculty role conflicts with respect to undergraduates and graduate students?

PROCEDURES

The faculty work role was broken down into seventeen activities. (See Table 2 below.) One set of instruments obtained the amount of importance undergraduates, graduates, and faculty gave to each work activity (role expectation) on a five point scale of high to low. Objective role conflict was defined as the difference in importance ratings each role set gave to each work activity. A second instrument had faculty rate the difficulty they believed they had in meeting the role expectations they believed undergraduates, graduates, and the administration of their School had for them, and what they had for themselves. This subjective role conflict was scaled on an ordinal five point scale from a very great extent to virtually no extent. (See Barnard (1971: 179-183) for the instruments.)

The pretested instruments were given to the entire sixty-seven number faculty and random samples of 125 undergraduates and 125 graduate students in spring, 1970. Altercations immediately afterwards (Cambodia and Kent State) damaged the anticipated response rates. Fifty-five,

sixty-six and fifty-two per cent, respectively, were received from each group.

FINDINGS

Table 1 has the correlation matrix of faculty objective and subjective role conflicts with respect to two role sets, undergraduate and graduate students. The statistically significant correlations

[Insert Table 1 about here.]

(.55 and .56) show that both objective and subjective role conflicts for both role sets are related. At the same time, the correlations are not so large that no differentiation is made between the two groups. Quite clearly just the opposite, for only 30% of the variance is accounted for by these coefficients.

In addition, the quite low and not significant correlation between objective and subjective role conflict with respect to each role set (.26 and .27) show that the difficulty faculty have in meeting the expectations (S) of undergraduate and graduate students are not related to the importance of the work activities as faculty view them (O).

To better see the discrepancies between difficulty and importance, subjective role conflict data on each work activity is collected in Table 2. Also included in the display are the faculty views with respect to administrators and themselves. Ranks as well as mean scores are included. Agreement on the rankings are given by ranked concensus scores, concensus being defined in terms of the variance (σ^2) on each work activity. The lowest σ^2 has a rank of one on concensus, etc. Ranks of each role set's rank on subjective role conflict and on concensus

Table 1: Corelations of Faculty Objective and Subjective Role Conflicts with Respect to Undergraduates and Graduates

	Objective Role Conflict-Undergraduate (O_u)	Objective Role Conflict-Graduates (O_g)	Subjective Role Conflict Undergraduates (S_u)	Subjective Role Conflict-Graduates (S_g)
O_u	-			
O_g	.55*	-		
S_u	.26	.23	-	
S_g	.47	.27	.56*	-

* $<.05$

are also included. The arrangement of the activities in the Table

[Insert Table 2 about here.]

is roughly from the lowest rank (17) to the highest (1). The inferences below suggest the reasons for this organization.

To begin with, matters extraneous to the university -- civic activities, membership in professional organizations, speaking on matters pertaining to one's field, consulting -- caused little subjective role conflict. Concern is generally moderate. The messages received are either mixed ones or else they are diversely interpreted for concensus fluctuates. The generally high agreement as to the low objective role conflicts these four outside activities caused is well documented. With the exception of the factor ranked 14th -- graduate teaching, they constitute four of the lowest five ranks.

Next can be seen a group of four activities which are internal matters within the School and which are removed one step from teaching functions and several notches from those activities which contribute directly to a visible image of high status. Attending faculty meetings, serving as a faculty adviser to student groups, nonacademic student counseling, and serving on committees including the senate produce somewhat higher subjective role conflict than those work activities which are extraneous to the university. For the most part, however, they are in the middle or bottom half of the ranks. Furthermore, overall consensus is quite high. Actually, no other group of activities has quite as high consensus. Attending faculty meetings ranks at the very top, despite the fact that faculty think the administrators hold that activity more important than students do or than they do themselves. In other

Table 2: Faculty Subjective Role Conflict (S) and Consensus with Respect to Four Segments of the Faculty Role Set

FACULTY WORK ACTIVITY	Rank of Rank Ss	Rank of Rank Consensus	Self			Administration			Graduate Student			Undergraduate Stu		
			S Mean Score*	S Rank of $\bar{x}$	Consensus Rank	Mean Score*	Rank of $\bar{x}$	Consensus Rank	Mean Score*	Rank of $\bar{x}$	Consensus Rank	Mean Score*	Rank of $\bar{x}$	Consensus Rank
Civic, church, charitable activities	17	13	2.32	15	16	1.89	17	12	1.93	16	10	1.82	17	6
Membership, participation in professional organizations	16	11.5	2.31	16	8	2.09	13.5	7	1.97	15	9	2.00	16	12
Consulting, providing service for money	15	9	2.46	11	14	2.06	15	8	2.10	14	8	2.16	14	4
Speaking on matters pertaining to one's field	13	8	2.54	9	11	2.19	10	6	1.83	17	3	2.34	11	13
Attending faculty meetings	12	1	2.29	17	3	2.53	6	11	2.34	8.5	2	2.13	15	1
Serving as faculty advisor to student groups	10	5	2.34	14	7	2.42	7	13	2.34	8.5	1	2.38	10	7
Non-academic student counseling	9	11.5	2.49	10	12	2.09	13.5	2	2.58	3	11	2.68	5	11
Serving on committees, senate,...	7	6	2.57	8	5.5	2.67	3	10	2.44	7	5	2.19	12	8
Preparation of undergraduate courses, grading,...	8	2	2.68	5	5.5	2.07	12	4	2.24	11	7	2.71	3	2
Undergraduate teaching	6	7	2.69	4	13	2.17	11	9	2.27	10	4	2.70	4	3
Undergraduate academic counseling	11	10	2.39	13	4	2.40	8	14	2.19	13	12	2.40	9	5
Preparation of graduate classes, grading,...	4	3	2.60	6.5	2	2.21	9	1	2.55	5	6	2.80	2	14
Graduate Teaching	14	4	2.43	12	1	2.06	16	3	2.21	12	13	2.46	8	9
Graduate academic counseling	3	14	2.71	3	10	2.61	4	5	2.79	2	14	2.59	7	16
Managing projects, institutes, workshops	5	16	2.60	6.5	15	2.55	5	17	2.56	4	16	2.18	13	10
Scholarly writing and publishing	2	17	3.06	2	17	2.73	2	15	2.53	6	17	2.87	1	17
Scholarly investigation & Research	1	15	3.24	1	9	2.91	1	16	2.81	1	15	2.63	6	15

* 5= very great to 1= virtually none.

words, there is reasonably high agreement about the importance of these activities among the faculty. They are not suffering great stress in meeting these role expectations.

Turning now to those activities which consume the greatest amount of faculty work time, three divisions appear. One involves undergraduates, a second concerns graduate students, and the third deals with activities visible to the outside world -- managing projects and institutes, and scholarly output. With respect to undergraduates, subjective role conflict falls exactly in the middle of the 17 possibilities. Consensus is on the high side. There is good agreement that preparation of undergraduate courses is important and that all role sets, including the self, believe this to be the case. There is less agreement as to the role of undergraduate academic counseling. Also, its importance is not rated as a high priority item.

When it comes to the graduate role set, there are some interesting outcomes. To begin with, graduate teaching causes practically no subjective role conflict and rates very near the bottom. Furthermore, consensus is quite high on this work activity. Next, graduate academic counseling is perceived to be a highly important item by all role sets, but there is uncertainly as to how others are going to perceive its importance. The consensus rank is low because of the high disagreement among undergraduates and graduates. Besides, there is only a moderate lack of agreement among faculty themselves. At the same time, there is no doubt about the importance of preparing new graduate classes. This work

activity causes high subjective role conflict, agreement on the activity is high, moderated somewhat by an understandable uncertainty as to what importance undergraduates give to it.

Turning finally to research and other more visible activities, these work functions collectively have the highest subjective role conflict rank and the lowest consensus -- 5,2, and 1 on the former and 16, 17, and 15 on the other. Even more visible than dispersed graduate students who require some years before they achieve leadership and influential roles are the very public credits that come to the university through institutes and workshops. Only undergraduates do not seem to appreciate or understand this fact. Probably no one, including the administration, fully appreciates the many hours and time consuming activities that go into managing projects and bringing outsiders to the campus for public affairs. It may be for this reason that consensus is at the bottom. Furthermore, in order for a such a high rank for subjective role conflict to have such a low consensus, faculty must be widely split on this matter. Some assign this function a very high rating, others very low, and only a few at the mean.

Finally, research and writing rank one and two for faculty. Furthermore, they feel the administration also gives these activities the highest priority. Undergraduates and graduates differ only slightly, faculty feel. But like putting on institutes and workshops, consensus is extraordinarily low. The faculty are badly split. To have these highest ratings and greatest variances means the spread of scores is very great. Low consensus here is a sure sign of internal trouble.

Lastly, the mean scores in Table 2 show that the subjective role conflict is appreciably higher for self than for any other inter-sender role set. The mean scores for self exceed those by administrators, graduate students, and undergraduate students by almost half a scale point, no small difference. Hence the kind of overload that is being experienced to produce subjective role conflict is a qualitative one. It has to do with whether or not the faculty believe that they could carry out the task that they believe others expect of them, irrespective of whether or not there is enough time. Clark and Blackburn (1972) speak to the serious consequences of this kind of stress on faculty performance.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

To begin with, this inquiry supports the literature which demonstrates that change from the top downward is effective. Misreadings of priorities may result and stress may be increased, but a move toward institutional visibility is clear. Strong leadership is changing the organization.

At the same time, the variation in consensus suggests that an improved flow of messages between role sets -- up, down, and sideways -- can help. It is to be expected that there will never be complete uniformity of agreement on either the organization's goals or on the best way to accomplish them. However, reduction in misread expectations can reduce some stress and elevate performance, at least for some individuals.

A word of caution. Doubts remain that successful reduction of stress will result in all areas. For example, with respect to research, scholarship, and publications, the faculty's greatest subject role conflict resides with the self. The causes are unknown. If they arise from stress from quantitative overload (more to do than there is time in which to accomplish it), then some relief is possible, theoretically at any rate. But if the stress stems appreciably from qualitative overload (self uncertainty regarding possession of the talents to accomplish a task, even with ample time), then the matter is of a different kind.

It may well be that qualitative overload predominates at Mideastern. Senior faculty in years at the university had not been publishing. Their research skills became arthritic. To realistically expect they can be made functionally operative is highly unlikely. The junior members were recruited in a large part because they possessed the potential of visible scholarship. However, many are still yearlings. Potential and demonstrated success are not equivalents. Research output is not an instantaneous accomplishment of a remodeled university. It is even more difficult when role models are absent, when support over first failures are lacking. Rejection slips hardly make a day. Stress may rise rather than fall, despite clarity of expectations.

In this connection, the administration can do well to reexamine its reward structure and practices, and to pay attention to the inhabitants in the environment. As the university climbs the evolutionary ladder by unnatural selection, it must continue to ask

herself -- for whose benefit and at whose expense is this system being dramatically altered.

Are the clients (students) receiving a better education? Or are just more of them getting about the same? Or even a diluted one? Are the accolades all for the queen bee? At the expense of the drones? Taylorism and its consequences are well documented in human cost. Golding's The Spire displays the humanist's insight into monument building. When an administration tampers with persons and environment, all the eugenic dangers enter in.

Are we soon to witness among faculty the appearance of a strain of induced mutants whose adaptation replaces traditional teaching activities for, say, a role of managing the learning process of students through technological means? Shall we find cadres of teaching specialists on some floors of faculty office buildings and team of researchers on other levels? With Gammas escalating up and down between the Alphas and Betas? Will faculty convince administrators to role back student enrollments or to decrease the student faculty ratio by hiring additional faculty? Or will ever-increasing demands upon faculty lead inexorably to faculty organization and strategies for exerting restraints upon administrators (e.g., formal investigations, censures, unionization) in an attempt to reachieve a viable homeostatic state in a less stressful environment?

In any event, the university as a watershed isolated from

the mainstream has now taken its place in the paleozoic era. Yesterday's serene everglade has given way to today's extended and interacting environment. Concern for the human dimension in this new world becomes more critical an issue, not less a one. Those dedicated to the good health of higher education had best reserve some of their attention to the well-being of those who have made colleges and universities their home. After all, faculty are a very important species. They selected their environment for altruistic, not selfish reasons. Their commitment to the success of colleges and universities is exceeded by none.

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